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AFRICAN HISTORY

IN THIS ISSUE of the HARAMBEE FLAME, the focus will be on African history. When we speak of "African History," we refer, not only to the history of African people in Africa, but to our history wherever we may be. This issue primarily contains excerpts from magazine articles, books, etc. which we hope you will find to be insightful and significantly informative.

As our history is not a dead thing but something which is ongoing, some articles in this African History edition will cover current developments. May you find the February FLAME to be a valuable document.

--the editor

WOMEN OF AFRICA

"In Africa the woman's 'place' was not only with her family, she often ruled nations with unquestionable authority. Many African women were great militarists, and on occasion led their armies in battle. The Africans had produced a civilization where men were secure enough to let women advance as far as their talent, royal lineage and prerogatives would take them.

"...The appearance of Queen Hatshepsut, about 1,500 years before the birth of Christ, launched the beginning of their historical prominence in the affairs of state. Hatshepsut's reign was one of the brightes in Egyptian history, proving that a woman can be a strong and effective ruler. She was, according to the Egyptologist James Henry Breasted, 'the first great woman in history of whom we are informed.'

"In the early part of the fifth century of the Christian era, Hypatia, the daughter of Theon, the mathematician, conducted an academy in Alexandria. This talented lady gave lectures on the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, and instructed her students on the works of Apollonius and other geometers. Bishop Cyril decided that such knowledge must be suppressed, and he proceeded to take the necessary steps to achieve that objective...'Each day before her academy stood a long train of chariots; her lecture rooms were crowded with the wealth and fashion of Alexandria. They came to listen to her discourses on those questions which man in all ages has asked, but which never yet have been answered: What am I? Where am I? What can I know? Hypatia and Cyril! Philosophy and bigotry...As Hypatia repaired to her academy, she was assaulted by Cyril's mob--a mob of many monks. Stripped naked in the street, she was dragged into a church, and there killed by the club of Peter the Reader...'

"In the 16th. century, the Portuguese stake in the slave trade was threatened by England and France. This caused the Portuguese to transfer their slave-tra-

ing activities southward to the Congo and South West Africa. Their most stubborn opposition, as they entered the final phase of the conquest of Angola, came from a queen who was a great head of state and a military leader with few peers in her time. The important facts about her life are delineated in the forthcoming book, QUEEN NZINGHA AND THE MBUNDU RESISTANCE TO THE PORTUGUESE SLAVE TRADE, by Professor Roy A. Glasgow of Bowie State College, Bowie, Maryland. In the book, he writes:

'Her extraordinary story begins in 1583, the year of her birth. She is known as Jinga, or Ginga, but more often as Nzingha, and she was the sister of the then-reigning King of Ndongo, Ngoli Bbondi, whose country was later called Angola. Nzingha belonged to an ethnic group called the Jagas. The Jagas were an extremely militant group who formed a human shield against the Portuguese conquest of her country and was always on the military offensive. As part of her excellent strategy against the invaders, she formed an alliance with the Dutch, whom she intended to use to defeat the Portuguese slave traders. At her request, she was given a body of Dutch soldiers...'

She believed that, after defeating the Portuguese, it would be easy to surprise the Dutch and expel them from her country. Consequently, she continued to maintain an amicable relationship with them and patiently waited for the appropriate time to turn against them...In convincing her people of the pernicious influences of the Portuguese, she would single out slaves and 'slave-soldiers' who were under Portuguese control and direct intensive political and patriotic messages their way, appealing to their pride in being Africans. She offered them land and freedom. This resulted in the desertion of thousands of these 'slave-soldiers' who joined her forces, forming a serious security problem for the Portuguese...

"In 1623, at the age of 41, Nzingha became Queen of Ndongo, and she began at once to strengthen her position of power...

"In 1645, and again in 1646, she suffered a series of setbacks in her campaign to drive the Portuguese out of Angola. Her sister, Fungi, was taken as a prisoner of war. The Portuguese beheaded her and threw her body in a river. Nzingha began to weight the merits of her own god, Ten-Bon-Dumba, as compared to the god of the Portuguese...With her questions still unresolved, she decided to join their religion and to test its strength in her favor. And for the remainder of her life she used this religion as a political tool, when it suited her.

"In 1659, she signed a treaty with the Portuguese that brought her no feeling of triumph. Now more than 75 years old, she had resisted the Portuguese for most of her adult life. Some of her faithful assistants and followers had died or given up the long fight. On December 17, 1663, this great African woman died. With her death, the Portuguese occupation of the interior of Southwest Africa began. The massive expansion of the Portuguese slave trade followed this event...

"In the resistance to the slave trade and the colonial system that followed the death of the queen, African women, along with their men, helped to mount offenses all over Africa. Among the most outstanding were: Madame Tinubu of Nigeria; Nandi, the mother of the great Zulu warrior Chaka; Kaipkire of the Herero people of Southwest Africa; and the female army that followed the great Dahomean King, Behanzin Bowelle. ..."

--from "The Black Woman In History" by John Henrik Clarke, which appears in the Feb. '75 edition of BLACK WORLD

"19th CENTURY BLACK POWER" IN U.S.

(This passage appears here because of the important parallels to the current political situation which it contains.)

"Nineteenth century Black power was shaped by an alliance between 'radical republicans' and Black establishment --read Freeman--leadership. The source of Black political strength lay in support from the republican party. Despite the Black votes that put Black politicians in office, they functioned in terms of the federal establishment. In this structure of affairs lay the vulnerability of Black power.

"Strong Black community organization did not exist to protect the tentative gains of reconstruction when they came under assault. 'Too many men, then as now,' according to Bennett, 'were living too far away from the people they said they were representing.' The 'decisive' failure of Black reconstruction leaders, Bennett believes, was their failure 'to mobilize a Black power base and to remain in close touch with the cotton roots of their constituencies.'

One ironic bit of proof of this leaps off the pages of history. Wormley House, where the Hayes-Tilden compromise of 1877 was finally sealed, was owned by a Black businessman. That compromise gave the Presidency to republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes in return for the removal of federal troops from the south. In general, Black leaders, feeling a republican president was preferable to a democrat, did not protest strongly. In the end, the compromise cost Black people the little bit of power they were beginning to gain.

Thus, in 1884, with reconstruction just about totally destroyed, and the evidence of betrayal by the republican 'party of emancipation,' undeniably manifest, the great Black journalist T. Thomas Fortune advised Blacks to abandon their blind loyalty to the republicans, and to use their 'voting power in independent local affairs with some discrimination more reasonable than an obstinate clinging to a party name.' Fortune himself attempted to organize an independent political movement, but was opposed by many of the major Black leaders and newspapers of the day..."

--from "A Consideration Of Black Power" by Charlie Cobb. This article is contained in the current issue of BLACK COLLEGIAN. Emphases added.

STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

"Since the first white settlers from Europe came to South Africa on April 6, 1652, one can talk of the resistance movement in South Africa as having started on that day. Throughout the centuries, black South Africans have resisted white domination and oppression in various ways, which have included wars, demonstrations, boycotts, and strikes. The form of resistance has always been dictated by the nature of oppression.

"An example of this was the formation of the African National Congress in 1912. At the end of the Anglo-Boer War, which was fought between the Dutch--who by then called themselves Afrikaners--and the British. The issue was whose colony South Africa should be, and a peace treaty, signed in 1902, gave Britain, the victor, control over South Africa. A clause that barred blacks from being members of Parliament was included in the treaty. In 1910, Britain granted South Africa self-rule, and once again blacks were conveniently left out of the negotiations. Refusing to be voiceless, the blacks formed their

political mouthpiece in 1912. The purpose was to oppose increasingly discriminatory legislation, which was being passed by an English-speaking government. At that time, the Afrikaners were in ipposition and virtually remained that way, except for a brief period when they formed a short-lived coalition with the English-speaking government, which broke up because the Afrikaners supported the Nazis and wanted South Africa to either fight on the side of the Nazis or to remain neutral. The blacks, through their movement, the African National Congress, supported the Allies and fought the Nazis. It is also worth pointing out that, in the West, there are many voices in official circles that refer to the African National Congress as 'a Communist-inspired organization.' There are two reasons for this. One is chronic ignorance, and the other is a deliberate distortion of facts. By the time the Russian Revolution took place, in 1917, the African National Congress was already five years old and was busy organizing blacks to resist white domination and oppression. That struggle continues.

"...With the coming of the Nats(National Party) to power in that year(1948), having won a so-called 'election' in which 80% of the population was excluded because they were balck, the Nats were free to introduce into South Africa a new ideology(apartheid) which was based on the premise that blacks were inherently inferior to whites and that this inferior status was ordained by God and, therefore, could never be changed.

"Black South Africans have not taken this oppression and dehumanization lying down. But, as their resistance grew, so did the brutality of the Nats intensify. The brutality reached a new high in 1960 when peacefully demonstrating black men, women, and children were brutally murdered and seriously injured by the police of the Nats' regime. To add insult to injury, the Nats banned the African National Congress as well as the Pan-Africanist Congress, which had been formed in 1958. All resistance to apartheid was declared illegal, and the apartheid laws were further tightened to make South Africa, as far as the treatment of blacks was concerned, a police state, which it has continued to be to this day...In 1964, part of the underground leadership of the African National Congress, which included Nelson Mandela, was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment, which means, in Afrikaner terminology, never leaving prison alive..."

--from pages 192-194 of Sipo E. Mzimela's APARTHEID: SOUTH AFRICAN NAZIISM

SUPPORT THE FLAME

Thus concludes our African History segment of this issue of the HARAMBEE FLAME. We are hopeful that you have found it to be thought-provoking.

As has been mentioned previously, we want very much to be able to get our newsletter into the hands of very many more people than is presently the case. As well, we want to keep improving the appearance of the FLAME.

You recall that biblical saying: "many are called but few are chosen." There is a variation of that which applies to the FLAME and its readership: "many receive but few pay." If you think the HARAMBEE FLAME is a valuable publication, then <u>give it your support by subscribing</u>. $6.00 will get you a one-year's subscription.

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A REACTION TO LT. GOODMAN's RETURN

"Today has not been such a good day for me. I feel like a warrior that has been speared by a poisonous sword. Today was a dark day for black women in America. Lt. Robert Goodman returns from Syria and shames us with the appearance of his white wife. And the bit__ looks a lot like Nancy Reagan. Why must our men shame us so? Far too many men of our generation--All freedom to them was to be able to sleep white without facing the consequences of death. Those same sons whose fathers would be lynched for looking at one. These same sons whose mothers were raped before their fathers' eyes. These same sons whose memory shows white women by the men's sides when they lynched a darky. Have we forgotten a history only one generation removed. There is a study done by Howard University that concluded that black men are one of the most gullible identifiable groups. And they constantly reinforce this premise. And Jesse risked his entire political career to save a nigger who loves our enemy. How can they rationalize hating the white man but loving his woman?

When I was really involved I remember Senator Chambers saying that any society is measured by the deeds of its men. If this is the case, I should be defecting because sisters are in trouble 'cause our men are busy chasing Ms. Ann. How do I cope with this pain? How do I teach my son to remember and not forget what has happened to us as a people? And let's face it. White women sat idly by while their men perpetuated history's greatest holocaust. They voted for Reagan. They share the same racist values as their men. Maybe I am searching for answers that these men out here can't answer. They most certainly don't make the men out here with them feel the least bit uncomfortable..."

(The letter from which the above passages have been excerpted, was written by V. This Sister is physically attractive, intelligent, is married, and has two children. She and her husband both work at jobs at which their mental abilities earn them their incomes.

The subject which the quotes passages of her letter discusss is a subject the FLAME has dealt with from time to time. If you have a response to what this Sister has had to say, you are encouraged to contribute your thoughts to this discussion. --the editor)

POETRY

BAPTIST WINE

got out of the house today
by squeezing myself
through the cracks in daddy's thumb.
I even crawled a little, but now
I'm out,
and what winds call
coerce, laying their soft caress
upon my cheeks and neck.
flavored fumes and flowered breath
taste good to me as you suck my lips
of course I follow
licking up
on the fantasies you blow.

But there are no flowers
only ice, only snow
rise up in greeting
fly in my nose, cutting me with "love"?
Still, glad not to be alone
I go on sinking into the holes
left by others who have fallen low.
"But I have company"
I think,
back to you
or with eyes closed
I keep on coming.

--t.h.